



Oregon

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DATE: April 23, 2007
TO: House Committee on Transportation
FROM: Troy E. Costales, Administrator
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SUBJECT: House Bill 3274

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 3274 modifies ORS 811.111 by allowing motor trucks less than 14,000 gross vehicle weight (GVW) to travel at the posted speed limit of a roadway. Currently, vehicles more than 10,000 GVW fall under the maximum 55 mile per hour speed limit on all roadways (or lower if posted).

DISCUSSION

This bill would allow vehicles under 14,000 GVW to travel at the posted speed limit of 65 miles per hour on Oregon Interstate Highways (or a lower speed limit if posted). It would remove vehicles between (10,000-14,000 GVW) from the maximum speed limit statutes (on all roadways except interstates) that they currently fall under.

If the bill passes, all vehicles less than 14,000 GVW would fall under the violation of the basic rule statute for all state highways, county roads or city streets (of non-incorporated cities). Incorporated cities are maximum speed limit areas for all vehicles on all roadway types within the city limits of the city.

There are a number of safety issues to consider before increasing the speed allowance of a vehicle. When comparing a 14,000 GVW vehicle at 55 miles per hour versus the same vehicle at 65 miles per hour, the following differences are noted:

- At 65, the vehicle possesses an additional 561,415 pounds of kinetic energy – in a crash this is very significant – an 18% increase in speed is a 40% increase in energy that the vehicle carries.
- At 65, the vehicle is traveling at 95 feet per second (a 14 feet per second increase).
- The 1.5 second perception/reaction distance change is 22 feet (143 feet versus 121 at 55 mph).
- The braking distance increases by 57 feet (201 versus 144 at 55 mph).
- Total stopping distance increases 30% overall (344 feet versus 265 feet at 55 mph).

A crash at higher speeds causes an exponential increase in crash forces. This results in increased injury severity up to and including increasing the number of deaths on Oregon roadways. What might be a physical injury in a crash at 55 mph may mean a traffic death in a crash at 65 mph.

SUMMARY

Speed is Oregon's # 1 traffic safety problem. Deaths from speed-related crashes now surpass alcohol and drug-involved traffic deaths in Oregon. In 2005, speed-related crashes killed 263 people on Oregon Roads. An additional 8,000 people were injured in speed-related crashes. Oregon does not have an adequate number of state or local police to ensure compliance with current speed laws as indicated by the number of people exceeding the posted speed and the number of deaths and injuries from speed-related crashes.